

Planning Commission Report

To: City Council

From: Planning Commission

Staff Contacts: Roberta Lewandowski, Director of Planning & Community Development, (425) 556-2447, rlwandowski@redmond.gov
Rob Odle, Policy Planning Manager, 556-2417, rodle@redmond.gov
Dianna Broadie, Senior Planner, 556-2414, dbroadie@redmond.gov
Lauren Kirby, Human Services Manager, 556-2423, lkirby@redmond.gov
Gary Lee, Senior Planner, 556-2418, glee@redmond.gov
Lori Peckol, Principal Planner, 556-2411, lpeckol@redmond.gov
Terry Shirk, Senior Planner, 556-2480, tshirk@redmond.gov

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DGA Number: L030277 and L040109

Recommendations:
Planning Commission: Approval.

Recommended Action: Adopt Ordinance No. _____, amending the Redmond Comprehensive Plan to add updated Downtown, Community Character and Historic Preservation, Human Services, Land Use, Housing, and Economic Vitality Elements. The recommended elements are located in Exhibit A.

Summary: Redmond is working on a major update of its Comprehensive Plan. This amendment is being undertaken to address both City policy to periodically evaluate and update the Comprehensive Plan, as well as to address requirements under the Growth Management Act for review and update of comprehensive plans by the end of 2004.

In September 2003, the City Council adopted the updated vision, goals, and framework policies that, together with the preferred 20-year growth strategy, set the direction for this update. Since then, the Planning Commission has completed recommended updates for several of the more specific elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

See Exhibit B for a summary of the major recommended policy updates compared to the existing policies.

**Reasons the
Proposal should be
Adopted:**

The proposed amendment should be adopted because:

- It reflects the preferred growth strategy selected by City Council, and the updated vision, goals and framework policies.
- It refines policies to better reflect community vision and values, as evidenced by: comments from the Planning Commission during study session discussions on the topic, citizen comments from public meetings, and comments from the Greater Redmond Chamber of Commerce.
- It updates the existing policies to remove those that have been completed or become outdated, improve readability, and eliminate redundancy.

Recommended Findings of Fact

1. Public Hearing and Notice.

Public Hearing Date

The City of Redmond Planning Commission held public hearings on the proposed amendments as follows: Downtown and Human Services (March 17, 2004), Land Use and Community Character/Historic Preservation (April 28), Housing and Economic Vitality (May 26). Approximately 12 people attended the March 17 public hearing, and approximately 5 people attended the April 28 and May 26 public hearings. Minutes for the public hearings are included in Exhibit D. Comments from the public hearings are also summarized in the issue tables in Exhibit C.

Notice

Notices of the public hearings were published in the Eastside edition of the Seattle Times. Public notices were posted in City Hall and at the Redmond Library. Notice was also given by including the hearing in Planning Commission agendas and extended agendas mailed to various members of the public and various agencies. Hearing notices were also included on the City's web page. For the Downtown, Land Use, and Community Character/Historic Preservation Elements, notice of the public hearing was included in a mailing to more than 400 people who have participated in previous workshops or expressed interest in planning related issues.

Copies of the proposed amendments were available in City Hall, from the City's web site, and for the Downtown Element, were distributed to members of the Parks Board.

Additional Outreach

Many of the proposed updates are in response to citizen comments from initial public meetings, including Housing Fair, Redmond Design Day, Connecting Redmond transportation events, and a number of neighborhood meetings.

In addition to public hearings on each proposed element, the City conducted additional community outreach on the Downtown, Community Character/Historic Preservation, Land Use, and Economic Vitality Elements. Staff mailed summaries of proposed updates and meeting invitations for these elements to more than 400 people who have participated in previous workshops or expressed interest in planning related issues. For the Downtown Element, the mailing included all Downtown property owners and businesses. Staff worked extensively with the Greater Redmond Chamber of Commerce Economic Vitality Committee on the proposed economic policies. There has also been outreach on the entire Comprehensive Plan update through several articles on issues under consideration in *Focus on Redmond*, through the Redmond 2022 portion of the City's web site, and through articles in the *Redmond Reporter*.

The City has also conducted special community and neighborhood meetings for several topics, such as the future of manufacturing in Redmond, consideration of whether to allow housing in the Manufacturing Park zone, proposed rezone of the Chee property in SE Redmond, and for Perrigo's Plat.

2. Public Comments.

Exhibit D includes written comments and the public hearing minutes. Comments on specific issues are also summarized in Exhibit C.

Recommended Conclusions

1. Key Issues Raised by the Planning Commission

In September 2003, the Planning Commission began work on proposed updates to several of the specific elements of the Comprehensive Plan. A primary goal of the updates was to reflect the preferred growth strategy; updated vision, goals, and framework policies; and citizen comments from initial community and neighborhood meetings. For each element, staff and the Commissioners reviewed the existing policies and identified issues for consideration as part of the update. Staff used this initial direction to prepare recommended policy updates for each element.

Below is a summary of the Planning Commission's major discussion issues during review of staff recommended policy updates, including responses to issues raised by the public. Exhibit C includes a more detailed summary of the Planning Commission's major discussion issues and responses.

District Changes – Downtown Element (see maps)

To increase mixed-use residential development opportunities, the Planning Commission recommended expanding the Mixed-Use Residential District into the Convenience Commercial Districts in various locations, thereby reducing some of the convenience commercial land area (see maps of existing and proposed districts in Exhibit B). In general, the majority voted in favor of these changes, citing reasons such as a belief that some of the areas are major entry

points and better suited to the proposed mixed-use district, some areas were underutilized, and that the proposed changes would encourage more multi-story development, including residential development, rather than single-story auto-oriented uses. One Commissioner generally voted against the recommendations due to a concern that too much Convenience Commercial zoning would be reduced in the Downtown with the proposed changes. The Issue Summary for the Downtown Element, located in Exhibit C, provides a more detailed summary of the discussions for each location.

Cleveland Street as “Main Street” – Downtown Element (DT–39.1)

The Planning Commission considered three options for supporting the goal of making Cleveland Street a vibrant, pedestrian friendly place and reducing the perception of building height: 1) no change to existing policy, 2) establish a new policy to more specifically guide development of Cleveland Street, and 3) consider height restrictions. The majority supported option 2, and expressed a desire to designate the full length of Cleveland Street as the area needing “main street” design standards and themes. These Commissioners believed that the best way to achieve a vibrant feeling is to maintain the allowed building heights, focus on developing an active and appealing street, and bring people into the area. The Planning Commission also concurred on reducing the street classification on Cleveland Street on the Downtown Arterial Street map from principal arterial to local street.

One Commissioner supported option 3, commenting that many people in the community speak to the value they place on the green character of the City and don’t want things to change. This Commissioner expressed concern that allowing 6-story buildings along Cleveland Street will create a tunnel effect, lose the perception of green, and create a wall along the BNSF right of way. Another Commissioner agreed, but noted the allowed building heights are in place and that option 2 may be the right approach.

Perrigo’s Plat – Downtown Element (proposed DT–61 to -65)

As part of preliminary discussions regarding conceptual amendments to Downtown policies, the Planning Commission raised questions concerning the section of Downtown known as Perrigo’s Plat. Perrigo’s Plat includes the 4 blocks that are bounded by NE 85th Street, NE 80th Street, 164th Avenue NE, and 166th Avenue NE. Perrigo’s Plat was of special interest to the Planning Commission due to its unique and inviting character, including the feel and appearance of the single-story bungalows and 2-story buildings in the area, large trees along the street, and generous front yards. Among the questions the Planning Commission considered are, what characteristics of Perrigo Plat are important to retain, what approaches could be used, which approaches make the most sense, and could property owners be provided more incentives to retain the bungalows. The City held a meeting on January 26, 2004 to seek input from property owners and concerned citizens.

Based on the January meeting, public hearing, and further deliberations, the Planning Commission recommended a new policy that calls for establishing additional design standards for Perrigo’s Plat to complement the existing, quaint, residential feel of this area. Also, the Commission recommended providing greater flexibility in allowed uses for the existing bungalows to create incentives to retain these structures and to ensure that they are well

maintained until they are redeveloped. The Planning Commission revised the policies in response to comments at the public hearing which indicated that further clarification was needed regarding existing commercial buildings and allowed uses.

Bear Creek Parkway – Downtown Element (DT-40, 9th bullet)

In their review of the Downtown policies, the Planning Commission recalled that until recently, Bear Creek Parkway appeared to be the only option for providing an additional arterial bypass. Now that SR-520 and SR-202 are set to be improved, the Commissioners commented that some of the pass-through traffic pressure can be relieved, and Bear Creek Parkway should be preserved and enhanced. The Commissioners believed that turning Bear Creek Parkway into a five-lane arterial will create a major barrier between Town Center and the open space along Bear Creek and the rookery. The Commissioners commented that while Bear Creek Parkway serves a valuable function in allowing for local access and circulation, it should not serve as a venue for regional pass-through traffic. The Commissioners recommended language in DT-40 (9th bullet) calling for the Parkway to be preserved and enhanced as a 2 to 3 lane road in terms of pedestrian character and friendliness, as opposed to being improved as a 4 to 5 lane bypass road. The Commissioners commented that preservation of the open space and resources in this area is paramount to citizens. The Planning Commission also recognized that this vision on Bear Creek Parkway extends to planned connections on the east and west ends.

Equestrian Use in City - Community Character/Historic Preservation Element (CC-24)

The City's existing policy acknowledges equestrian lifestyles in the City, promotes connections to equestrian facilities, and calls for a study of an equestrian overlay zoning district. Since adoption of this policy, the single equestrian community along 132nd Avenue NE has requested to be included in Kirkland's potential annexation area, rather than Redmond's. The City of Redmond and Kirkland are both willing to explore this. Also since the adoption, a major stable facility in North Redmond was demolished, and a number of subdivisions were developed on what was once large pasture area.

In response to public comment at the hearing on the Community Character and Historic Preservation Element, the Planning Commission further considered potential interest in and benefits of establishing an equestrian overlay zone. The Commission's conclusion was that much of the citizen comment concerned locations beyond Redmond's urban growth area. The City has long maintained its commitment to protecting and not annexing designated rural land north and east of Redmond. In addition, the Commissioners observed that the residential development market in North Redmond has not indicated an interest in an equestrian overlay zone.

However, some major connecting equestrian trails currently do exist in the City of Redmond, and equestrian facilities will likely continue to exist in Bellevue, Kirkland, and in rural areas to the north and east. Therefore, the Planning Commission recommended maintaining and strengthening the portion of the policy concerning equestrian connections between Redmond and surrounding communities. The existing Parks and Recreation Element also contains several policies concerning equestrian trails. In addition, the Commission noted that a policy could be

added to the Annexation Element when it is updated later this year to address citizen concern about retaining equestrian communities east of the City.

Community Character – Community Character and Historic Preservation Element (several policies)

In response to significant community interest in retaining and enhancing the qualities that keep Redmond special and distinguish the City from other locations, the Planning Commission recommended a new element that places additional emphasis on community character and preservation and enhancement of community gathering places. The Planning Commission also recommended policies that call for identifying, establishing, and enhancing gateways into the City, and supporting neighborhood efforts to identify unique neighborhood gateways.

Residential Land Use Designations – Land Use Element (LU-30 to -32)

Currently, the residential designations in the Land Use Element are broken into five groups, from Large Lot Residential to High Density Residential. Staff recommended establishing the residential land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan as follows:

- Single Family Constrained (1 to 3 dwellings per acre)
- Single Family Urban (4 to 8 dwellings per acre)
- Multi Family Urban (12 to 30 dwellings per acre)

These designations would continue to be implemented by specific zones, such as R-4, R-5, and R-12. No zoning changes are proposed.

At the policy level, there is currently not a great deal of difference between some of the groupings (such as Large Lot and Low Density). In addition, some objectives that are stated in the existing Moderate Density Designation (such as allowing smaller lot single-family development) are objectives residents have stated they would like to encourage.

The proposed groupings would likely increase the number of rezones that are compatible with the Comprehensive Plan (and therefore require only a zoning map amendment considered through a Type IV process) compared to those that require amendment of both the Comprehensive Plan and zoning map, and involve a Type VI process. As a result, it would allow residential rezones to be considered more frequently. Currently, a property owner could wait a year or more for a change if they miss the docket for the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment.

The Planning Commission considered the differences between a Type IV (Hearing Examiner and City Council) and Type VI (Planning Commission and City Council) decision process. The Commissioners also recognized that the City charges a fee for consideration of a zoning map amendment but does not charge a fee for consideration of a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The Commissioners concurred with staff's recommendation for the following reasons: they believed broadening the groupings is consistent with the approach for the Comprehensive Plan update, the proposed groupings were reasonable, and that the proposed change would enable

more applicants to have a quicker review and decision on proposed zoning changes, since fewer requests would be limited to being considered as part of an annual Comprehensive Plan update.

*Site Requirements and Design Standards for Residential Development –
Land Use Element (LU-8.5)*

Residents have expressed concern from time to time about the appearance of new residential developments. Particular areas of concern include homes that appear too large for their lot, too close together, or quite a bit taller than adjacent homes. While the City's existing regulations limit building height and require a minimum separation between buildings, these standards do not specifically consider the height of adjacent homes or prevailing pattern in the neighborhood.

The Commissioners considered the differences between site standards (such as lot coverage and building separation) and design standards (such as requiring design of multiplex structures to have features typical of a single-family dwelling, such as a pitched roof or window trim). They also recalled that there are design standards that apply to single family dwellings in the Willows/Rose Hill neighborhood and are recommended for the Grass Lawn neighborhood to promote compatibility with neighborhood character, such as variety in buildings and inclusion of landscaping. Design standard are also applied for Planned Residential Developments.

In addition to these situations, the Commissioners supported applying special site standards and design standards for residential development in the following cases:

- To provide variety in building and site design and visually appealing streetscapes in residential developments of several dwellings or more;
- To promote compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, particularly adjacent residences, when rezones will increase residential development capacity or when density bonuses or flexibility in site standards are utilized; and
- To emphasize features typical of detached single-family dwellings as part of residential structures containing two or more dwelling units.

The Planning Commission also supported applying special site standards and design standards to minimize significant impacts on adjacent residents, such as loss of light or privacy, due to large residential infill buildings. The Commissioners believed that the potential for construction of an extremely large house on an infill lot was a significant issue and cited concerns heard from citizens in the community. Since the amount of infill in existing neighborhoods will likely increase in Redmond, there is potential also for increasing problems of incompatibility. Establishing standards through neighborhood planning is a good approach but takes more time. The Commissioners believed some strengthening of the City's standards on a communitywide basis would be beneficial to avoid problems in the future.

*Land Use Compatibility between Residential and Employment Uses or Zones - Land Use
Element (LU-10.5 and 10.6)*

During the past few years, a few residential developments have been constructed within or near manufacturing or industrial areas of Redmond. While these developments have been an important part of providing homes close to work places, there is also potential for noise, dust, and truck traffic from these business areas that disturbs nearby residents.

The Commissioners discussed various scenarios, such as locations where a residential zone abuts a Business Park zone, and considered whether businesses would be unfairly burdened by the City's existing and proposed policy of minimizing impacts on the lower intensity use. They also considered whether a change was appropriate for mixed use zones such as the Downtown.

The Planning Commission concluded that the existing policy was reasonable, with the exception of adding that residential development, if any is allowed in the Manufacturing Park zone, would be responsible for recognizing and mitigating impacts associated with being next to manufacturing uses. The Planning Commission also recommended a policy intended to help promote awareness by prospective homebuyers of potential adverse impacts and avoid unwarranted complaints from residential uses proposed for location within or adjacent to Manufacturing Park or Industrial zones with businesses that comply with performance standards and other applicable regulations.

Affordable Housing – Variety in Sizes and Types to Meet Diversity of Household Needs - Housing Element (several policies)

The majority of the Planning Commission felt that diverse housing styles, sizes, and affordability levels is important to promoting neighborhoods rich in character, and that particular attention to diversity of sizes for low and moderate income households speaks to the issue of promoting economic diversity within the City. One Commissioner, while supportive of promoting a mix of affordable housing that is commensurate with the mix of market rate units in a development, felt that the affordable units should be encouraged or required only in attached housing developments.

Variety in Housing Style and Affordable Housing –Housing and Land Use Elements (several policies)

The Planning Commission considered whether cottage homes and attached homes should be permitted uses throughout the City, and whether the City should expand its inclusionary housing program to the entire City. The Commission recommendation is to conditionally allow innovative housing styles such as cottage homes and attached single-family homes (2 to 4 dwellings per building) until innovative housing programs are considered by each neighborhood.

In addition, the Commission recommended a policy that provides for considering incentives such as residential density bonuses, variations in allowed use, or flexibility in regulations if a proposal meets community goals for affordable, senior, size-limited, or other types of innovative housing. The Commission also endorsed an innovative housing pilot program that will more quickly allow for flexibility in density and design standards for proposed housing until neighborhood plans are updated.

Finally, the Planning Commission recommended creating an incentive package to encourage voluntary compliance with affordability programs by builders, until such inclusionary programs are considered by each individual neighborhood. Currently, Downtown and Willows/Rose Hill are the only neighborhoods in which regulations require a percentage of all new housing units in developments of 10 units or more to be affordable to households earning 80 percent or less of the King County median income. The Grass Lawn neighborhood has endorsed a similar regulatory requirement. The Commission also recommends a policy that calls for use of the City's transfer of development rights (TDR) program as part of the incentive package. The TDR program could be used to allow additional density in exchange for creation of an affordable home or to provide a certificate that could be used elsewhere in the City.

2. *Recommended Conclusions of the Technical Committee.*

The recommended conclusions in the Technical Committee Reports (Exhibit E) should be adopted as conclusions.

3. *Planning Commission Recommendation.*

The Planning Commission unanimously approved motions to recommend Comprehensive Plan amendments and issue summaries for the following elements: Human Services, Downtown, Community Character and Historic Preservation., Land Use, and Housing. The Planning Commission is scheduled to complete its recommendation on the Economic Vitality Element on July 14.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A:	Planning Commission's Recommended Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan
Exhibit B:	Summary of Major Policy Recommendations
Exhibit C:	Summary of the Planning Commission's Substantive Discussion Issues
Exhibit D:	Public Comments
Exhibit E:	Technical Committee Report

Roberta Lewandowski, Planning Director

Date

Martin Snodgrass, Planning Commission Chairperson

Date

Approved for Council Agenda

Rosemarie Ives, Mayor

Date